

BALLET TODAY

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A MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO BALLET EVERYWHERE

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PETER REVITT'S

BALLET GUYED

with a foreword by MARY CLARKE

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

BY the time this issue appears the all-too-short London season of the American National Ballet Theatre will be over. (I expect we must get used to the new title, bestowed on them since the sponsoring by the U.S. Government of its present European tour, but the old one had a friendlier ring, just as we tend to talk affectionately of The Wells.) Mary Clarke will be writing a full account in the next issue but I could not let this so very welcome re-appearance pass without some reference, particularly as its presence at the Edinburgh Festival was my primary reason for going there this year—a trip arranged the moment the announcement was made that Ballet Theatre was to be one of the attractions and long before it was known that it would travel to London. There can be little doubt that of all the visiting companies this is the one most dear to the hearts of London audiences who each year since 1946 had hoped to see it again. I do not feel that anyone can have been disappointed. The repertoire is indubitably the strongest of any seen at Covent Garden since before the war, the principals are brilliant and are supported by a number of fine soloists and an exceptionally sound *corps de ballet*. The friendly warmth and enthusiasm behind its solid merits give this company a unique personality and we all hope the dancers were as happy to be back as we were to have them here. I think they were.

So at last the present generation of ballet goes (and a great many dancers also) had the opportunity of seeing Igor Youkevitch who has been a living legend here for the last twelve years. He is the rarest of all types, the *premier danseur noble* with a technical equipment easily capable of the requirements demanded by the virtuoso roles. He is not the Petipa Bluebird which was created for the small and bouncing Cecchetti and finds its ideal exponent today in Jean Babilée (on his good nights and if he would only do the whole solo). Instead he makes of it the perfect solo for a Prince of classical ballet. He is not a speciality dancer—he

simply excels in the whole range of the male technique, performing every step with such flow and ease that one is almost tempted to believe he is not doing anything so very difficult after all. One can watch his series of *double tour en l'air*, *pirouette*, *double tour*, *pirouette* in *Theme and Variations* with the same comfortable security as one would look at any one else doing a *coupé*. But what marks him out above all other dancers of the day is the beauty of his *port de bras* which no other male dancer even begins to approach. He is not spectacular enough, perhaps, for those who think of brilliance in terms of the flashy and untidy French dancers but to everyone else he can hardly fail to be an education, a revelation and a very real joy.

It would be very pleasant to be able to record a triumph for *The Witch*, John Cranko's ballet for New York City Ballet, presented only the day before the company finished its season on August 19th. Unfortunately this would not be true, for while the ballet has flashes of great beauty they are only moments in a somewhat turgid and much too long work which is handicapped by being arranged to Ravel's two-handed Piano Concerto which, particularly in the last movement, has a strong 1920 jazz idiom quite out of keeping with the lush Romanticism of the theme. The ballet is greatly helped by the fine performances of Melissa Hayden as the girl who, all unknowingly, is a witch, and of Francisco Moncion as the lover she kills in her witch-manifestation. Cranko has considerable talent for transformation scenes, and his *Lady-into-Witch* is as successful as his *Beast-into-Prince* a few months ago, but he was not able to work the miracle in the reverse direction and the spectacle of the two anxious dancers fumbling wildly to replace a skirt in the time allotted, spoilt what should have been one of the tensest moments of the ballet. Cranko seems to have reached a phase when his craftsmanship cannot keep pace with his bubbling ideas; when he has finally harnessed the two he will certainly give us the important ballet we all continue to expect from him.

I went to the recent demonstration of the Laban System of Dance Notation given by Albrecht Knust at the School of Russian Ballet with the pre-conceived notion that, although it would undoubtedly work for those who had made a long study of it, I should be out of my depth immediately. To my amazement, however, I found that it requires no more intelligence than the average person is prepared to give to any other study and could certainly be learnt day by day by young dancers with the same ease with which they acquire all their knowledge in those most receptive years. It is certainly no more difficult than learning shorthand. Half a dozen pupils of the School were perfectly well able to make the preliminary movements in all directions with both arms and legs after the signs had been

explained, and afterwards two members of the Manchester School of Movement who had studied the system thoroughly, read off and performed on the spot a dance that Mr. Knust had written out in dance notation on the long sheets with which one wall of the studio was hung. Most convincing of all was when one of these dancers (not ballet trained at all) was easily able to perform a series of classical *enchainements* even to using the correct *épaulement*, and though she could not always do the steps she knew exactly what they were, as, for example, when she stopped and said, "This is where you twiddle your feet in the air," and, sure enough, the notation was marked for an *entrechat*. Mr. Knust has left England for the time being but it is greatly to be hoped that he will return shortly to give further demonstrations of a most important development of Ballet.

P.W.M.

GOODBYE AGAIN

BEFORE the Sadler's Wells Ballet resumed the white man's burden in the far reaches of their empire, they paid a lightning visit to Covent Garden for one week, neatly sandwiched between the seasons of our two American visitors. It is always easier, if not pleasanter, to write about the new and strange than about the old and familiar, always easier to describe smart new shoes rather than comfortable old boots. Perhaps it is for this reason that I don't know where to begin in writing about this brief encounter with our National Ballet.

Of course I could give a full account of the cast changes and what-have-you. It could be pointed out that Rasmine was dancing better as Franz in *Coppélia* and that Hart wasn't, that Ray Powell made a very interesting debut as Dr. Coppélius (he plays it like something out of Disney, and contrives to out-helpmann Helpmann), I could praise Bryan Ashbridge and Margaret Dale in *Ballabile* (Chatfield and Negus parts respectively), and express pleasure at the promise of Rosemary Lindsay's *Sylphides* mazurka, and end by saying that Fonteyn, Elvin, Grey and Somes are really wonderful dancers. Then I could be withering about the choreography of *Coppélia*, say that *Ballabile* wears as well as last year's comic song but deserves a place in the repertory for, among other things, the chances it gives for dancing, and write gushingly of *Ballet Imperial*. I could—but I won't. The season is too old for anyone to be interested, and who wants to read reviews of a repertory consisting of one ballet and the leavings? No, I won't do that.

But if not that, what? If this magazine had more to do with sociology than ballet, it would have been

possible to analyse the difference between the Sadler's Wells audience and the audience for any other ballet company. Had I been writing ballet history, I would have noted that this is the Wells' first "season" that did not include works by either Ashton or de Valois, and then claim it to be the first occasion that a ballet by Balanchine has been included in the programme of three different companies, consecutively appearing on the same stage within ten days. However, this is neither ballet history nor sociology.

Of course, I could tell you who was present in the audience, but no one was. I mean all the nice people you want to hear about were away enjoying themselves, and no one was cutting anyone. I could always show the Ultimate Significance of the season in relation to Contemporary Art Forms in a few well-chosen but insubordinate clauses, but I think I would prefer to be cagey about that. Instead I could tell you all the scandal I know, except that I don't know any scandal. I could always give a list of programme corrections (Wed. Eve. for A. Grant read P. Clegg, etc.), but I feel that they are rather lacking in general appeal. Were I nasty-minded I could compare the Wells with the American cousins who are outflanking them, but as Dr. Johnson possibly said, "Comparisons stink".

So here I am, words exhausted, notice unwritten, week's season unhonoured and unsung. For me the week had something of the atmosphere of a railway station. It was as though we had a minute or two ago seen off a smart new girl-friend, were waiting impatiently for the arrival of an old flame of a few years back, and in between these two important social commitments were assisting at the departure of our favourite aunt. What can one say in the circumstances? Except perhaps, "Goodbye, Good Luck, and be good, be very good".

CLIVE BARNES.

News from New York

THERE is a busy season ahead for New York balletomanes. In addition to the Sadler's Wells season at the Metropolitan Opera House, Roland Petit returns with his Company for a four week run at the Century Theatre opening on October 2nd. They will be followed in November by the Grand Ballet de Marquis de Cuevas and for part of the same month the New York City Ballet will also have a two or three week season. On December 11th the New York City Dance Company will commence a two week season. Charles Weidman is staging the dances for the New York City Opera Company and, of course, Tudor is doing likewise at the Met.

ARTHUR TODD.

TECHNICAL SEXERCISES

By CARYL BRAHMS

THOSE who feel that The New York City Ballet is perhaps an over-resonant name for a bunch of youngsters appearing in stark little ballets with or without Messages, delivered by no dancer of the first magnitude, must remember that the function of this company is more important than its present achievement, for in acting as a workshop for Georges Balanchine it is exercising one of the first choreographers of the world. Indeed, had it been more modestly housed, its somewhat severe repertory might have shewn to better advantage.

But for a company to come to Covent Garden is for it to take up a challenge, not only by comparison with Sadler's Wells Ballet, but, in the case of American companies, with one of their own Ballets.

Ballet Theatre came to The Garden in 1946 with its own stars and a comet's tail of bright new ballets planned by Eglevsky, Nora Kaye, Alicia Alonso, Jerome Robbins, Michael Kidd, John Kriza. Their programme included *Pillar of Fire*, *Fancy Free*, *Interplay*, *On Stage*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and other works which we liked less, perhaps, but which were decorated in an exciting manner by exciting artists.

It can be argued that some of these artists have now

left Ballet Theatre (Robbins, Eglevsky and Kidd are cases in point) and also that Ballet Theatre has been established longer than the New York City Ballet, but this latter fact only nails in the plank of my argument: that the New York City Ballet, though gifted, courageous and loyal, is not yet ripe for international scrutiny in the Opera Houses of the world, and its programme building must have come perilously near to wrecking what success it had.

Of their eighteen ballets I have seen fifteen. Of these I propose to discuss six only: *The Prodigal Son*, *Orpheus*, *Illuminations*, Balanchine's revival of *Firebird*, *Jinx* and *The Duel*. It will be seen that none of these works is purely and strenuously academic; for to my mind the place for scales and exercises is in Academe—no matter how protracted the scales, how elaborate the exercises, nor how busy the five fingers.

The stage requires some added alchemy to transform technique into art, an alchemy as indefinable yet as necessary as an atmosphere; an alchemy as compelling as *Once Upon A Time*; and this alchemy, this theme, is essential to my enjoyment of a ballet. That is why I never find *Ballet Imperial* less than delightful, but take little delight in *Symphony in C*.

NICHOLAS MAGALLANES,
BARBARA BOCHER AND
FRANK HOBI LOOK OUT
OVER ONE OF THE
TERRACES AT WINDSOR
CASTLE



Photograph by courtesy
of "Dance News"



Photograph by Walter E. Owen

YVONNE MOUNSEY AND HERBERT BLISS IN "JONES BEACH"

Nor have any of the ballets that I shall discuss a Message—with the possible exception of the Ashton-Rimbaud work in which, if message there is, it could only be a warning to wantons not to pick on poets.

"You British are scared of Messages," an American colleague remarked to me perplexedly. And with the Robbins-Bernstein *Age of Anxiety* and the Robbins-Blitzstein *Guests* in mind, I'm here to state He Said It! Shallow, that's Us!

But *The Prodigal Son* has a story to tell that is half as old as time and an atmosphere of its own. The ballet is by Kochno, with choreography by Balanchine to the music of Prokofiev. It was first presented by Diaghilev. We were inclined of old to dismiss it as the best ballet of a bad patch. But how it shone out among all those Technical Sexercises to which this company is so addicted.

Decorated with the sort of wide-eyed simplification considered cute in the twenties, Roualt's scene broods over the ballet with the strength of a day-dream spun by Epstein's Rima. And under its sultry figuration, and to Prokofiev's music, sturdy as a moujik—a sturdy moujik, be it understood—the parable comes to life, not with the beauty of the Bible—to look for its like in simplicity, grandeur and tenderness would be to hope for a miracle too many—but with a teeming invention which does not exhaust itself in turning

trestle into galley and Lady into Figurehead, or Dancer into hoop, but expends itself in a thousand grotesque and graphic patterns, in which pity for the Prodigal has its place. The passages of passion between Prodigal and Temptress are stylised after the true fashion of Ballet Russe: "There is no offence in't". And the affecting scene of the plundering of the Prodigal brought home to me with sudden intensity the full meaning of the phrase "a shameful betrayal".

A satiric treatment of the orgy under the scrutiny of bald-headed debauchees in grotesque groups is a feature of the ballet. But *le shocking* was banished from the mind as though it had never attempted to assail it, as the ballet arrives at a full close, and with infinite understanding Wise Father takes Errant Son into his all-enveloping arms; we are back in the Bible with William Blake. As the curtain fell another of the expressions I have accepted without examination, acquired suddenly a fuller significance. It was that simple phrase: "The bosom of the family". Flout it as he may, it is the sempiternal nursery of foolish man.

The Prodigal Son was excellently danced throughout and in particular by Yvonne Mounsey, the Temptress, aloof and stylish as an acrobat with her routine at her toe-tips, and by Francisco Moncion, the Prodigal,

TANAQUIL LE CLERCQ AND HAROLD LANG IN "BOURREE FANTASQUE"

Photograph by Walter E. Owen



whose acting has so far outstripped his dancing) calling out our amused pity in his green dilemma.

That night, at least, I left the Opera House in a happy frame of mind, for I knew I had been at a Ballet.

Orpheus, again by Balanchine, to music by Stravinsky with decorations by Noguchi, afforded ballet-goers another occasion of being at a Ballet.

The music, newly composed for this company, related to Stravinsky's middle period; that of *Apollon Musagètes* though it was less chastely intellectual, more richly theatrical, than that excellent score.

As a ballet *Orpheus* is less classically compact and consequently much less stylish than *Apollo*, as Ballet theatre announces it, and indeed it could not be otherwise in view of the nature of the myth. But the company expended on it their customary devotion, and as Eurydice, Tallchief's movement was at its most eloquent. But if the white gauze curtain which floated down from the flies, catching the lights as it blew out and subsided, was the most pleasing thing in the ballet, in other respects Noguchi was less happy in his decorative effects.

It humiliates me to admit that I liked a great deal of what I could not understand, in the Rimbaud-Britten-Ashton-Beaton ballet, *Illuminations*, while on the other hand I disliked intensely several passages of the meaning of which there could not be a shadow of doubt.

Ashton has taken the figure of the young Rimbaud and sent him surrealistically spinning among his poems. The ballet is a work of atmosphere which has been enormously helped by Beaton's blotted copybook backcloth, with its doodled suns and stars, and hindered on the whole by his costumes. But I fail to see that violently realistic physical love-making has a place in a work of symbols and suggestions, beautifully danced though it was by Melissa Hayden and Nicholas Magallanes.

Britten's song cycle (sung on the first night by Peter Pears with an artistry that rendered the spectacle superfluous) seemed to be taking place on a different plane and in a different time from its graphic counterpart. The music, which was composed for the concert platform, seemed to be looking back over the past; the ballet relived the past as from the present.

But though there were things in the work that I do not look for in a ballet, I was far less shocked at the loose love in *Illuminations* than by Balanchine's Rape of Mozart in *Symphonie Concertante*, a particularly naïve attempt to translate the colloquy of the divine in terms of a babble of tu-tu and toe; even though the tu-tu was crisp and the toe at times quite beautifully extended.

And I was almost equally distressed by Balanchine's revival of *Firebird*.

Firebird in its former Phoenix life, had a magnificent score by Stravinsky, one of the three greatest pieces of

music composed for Ballet; this score has been ruthlessly cut by the composer. It had settings mysterious as the workings of a Ballet Impresario's mind. It had a choreography which, while not on a uniform plane of invention, had a simple dignity and, for me, a compelling magic. The ballet itself was clear, its atmosphere one of dedication, and it told its enchanting story with detailed despatch.

I wonder if the new ballet-goer could follow the new *Firebird*? I found it by no means clear, but then I was distracted by the cuts in the music, and irritated by the banality of the Dance Infernal—always the weakest part of the work. I missed the rapt tenderness in the Berceuse where the Firebird puts the world to sleep, a pendulum on a *pas de bourrée*; and here I found the choreography altogether too frivolous (an unusual complaint with this company!). I missed my golden apples, my tossing of the magic egg, my stately Princess and the poetry of her betrothal dance. The bells of Holy Russia did not ring down the Chagall sets. Indeed, this fine painter was too involved in some fantasy of his own to bother about the antique Russian fairy tale.

Of the company, only Komarova and Tallchief danced as Rousski's might. I came away with tears in my eyes, feeling that Fokine's ballet may be lost to the world for ever. But we have been told, and therefore must believe, that this version gave intense pleasure to the composer, who, if he had not called in all the copies of the old arrangement and revised the score, would not have benefited, under the American law of copyright, by performances of the work in the States. And thereby hangs a ballet.

And now for a pleasingly unpretentious little work, *Jinx*. This is a circus ballet by Lew Christenson to music of some distinction by Benjamin Britten, imaginatively decorated for relatively tuppence-a-halfpenny, which is the right sort of sum to exercise a director's imagination in this kind of improvisatory flash, where the only expense is that of taste. It might be felt to be an American *Les Forains*, without the nostalgic quality, the charm of the little French masterpiece. And I was so sorry that it had to topple into tragedy in the end. Indeed, examine it in cold blood and you will wonder what you could have found that charmed you at first sight. I think in my case it was sheer relief from those ages and ages of Anxiety and all those Sexercises.

The creators of *The Duel* had bad luck when on the first night their ballerina met with an accident. But with great courage, Melissa Hayden came back to finish her ballet. And I for one was delighted, not only because she was well enough to re-appear but because Dollar's second attempt to choreograph the superbly balletic subject of the matching of Clorinda with Tancredi is most effective with its pawing hooves and

tossing plumes, and the extended arms of the duelling dancers. The music by Raffaello de Banfield, a little in the manner of the middle Stravinsky (and a very good manner for a ballet it is) is charged with the true excitement of the Theatre.

This evening, while I was mid-article, I saw a very strange and at times interesting and lovely ballet.

It would be instructive to compare *Four Temperaments* with *Tristan Fou*. Balanchine's ballet is to music by Hindemith, a suite for piano and orchestra that was very shapely and expressive, and was in fact one of the most distinguished scores specially written for Ballet, that we have heard this season. The decors, by Kurt Seligmann, included a pretty backcloth of what I take to be a grave-cloth wound round what I take to be a tree, and costumes that were happier in colour than in danceable line. Among so much that was furiously trying to be outrageous, it was a chastening experience to find Phlegmatic—the third temperament on the left, as it were—slow, light and tender as the floating of the leaf I supposed it to be. The choreography has a great deal of masterly design and fine invention, much of it wilfully obscured by the costumes. In the interval I was asked what a critic wrote about when he could not understand a work. "Himself," I said. Or does he?

And be it never forgotten that no ballet by Balan-

HERBERT BLISS AS APOLLO IN "ORPHEUS"

Photograph by Walter E. Owen



chine, however tedious or wilful, is not illumined by some flash of limb in an inspired arrangement of the line of the human body in *The Dance*.

The company appears to be steeped in sex-consciousness to the eyebrows. However, I cannot but pay tribute to its devotion to all those difficult works. In Maria Tallchief they have a dancer of imagination and stylishness, but who has not quite the power of the prima ballerina yet. But I like to think that with her feeling for her art, the steel of strength and the brilliance of an added dexterity will come.

And among the talented devotion of the company I must mention the talent and devotion of Melissa Hayden, Tanaquil Le Clercq, Yvonne Mounsey, Janet Reed, Magallanes, Moncion and, after a fashion of his own, Harold Lang.

University of London Extension Courses on Ballet

The following courses are announced for the autumn and winter terms:

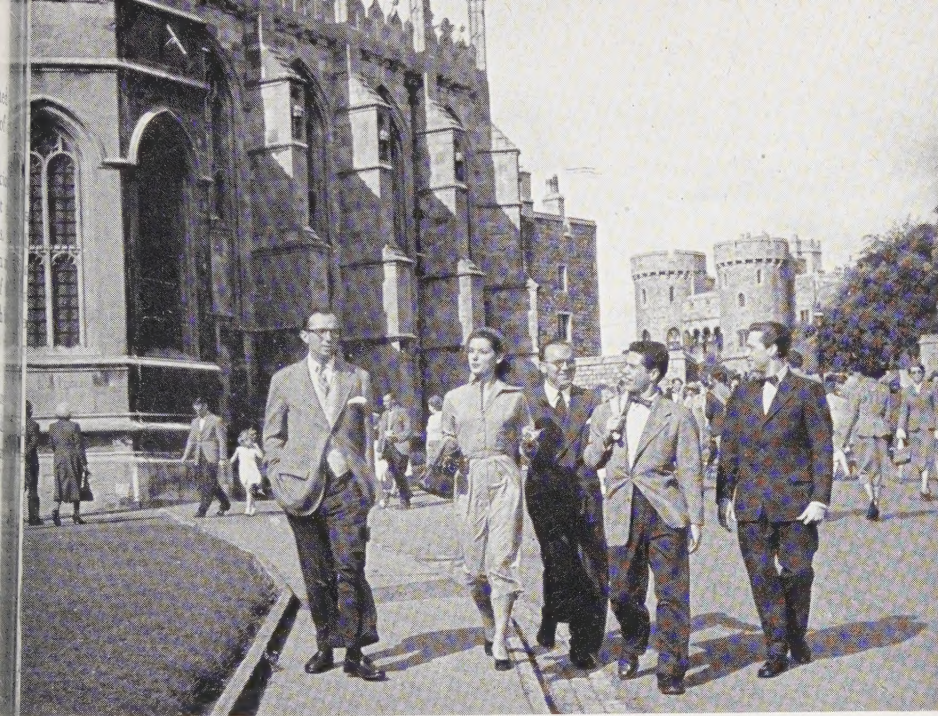
City L.C.C. Literary Institute, Stukely Street, Drury Lane, W.C.2. "History and Appreciation of Ballet" (24 lectures). A. H. Franks. Wednesday, 7.30 p.m. beginning 27th September. Fee for admission 10s. Application should be made to The Principal, at the above address.

Hampstead Heath Branch Library, Keats Grove, Hampstead, N.W.3. "History and Appreciation of Ballet" (24 lectures). A. V. Coton. Wednesday, 8 p.m. beginning 27th September. Fee for admission Sessional, 15s., Terminal, 8s. 6d. for each course. Hon. Secretary: S. J. Butcher, Esq., Central Public Library, Finchley Road, Hampstead, N.W.3.

South-West London Literary Institute, Putney C.S. School, Mayfield, West Hill. S.W.15. "The Art of Ballet" (24 lectures). A. V. Coton. Monday, 7.15 p.m. beginning 25th September. Fee for admission 10s. Hon. Secretary: W. R. John, Esq., B.A., The Deputy Principal, at the above address.

North-East London Literary Institute, Clapton Branch Library, Northwold Road, E.5. "Art of the Ballet" (12 fortnightly lectures). G. P. Symes, M.A. Friday, 7.30 p.m. beginning 13th October. Fee for admission 2s. 6d., Out-County students, 5s. Hon. Secretary: The Principal, at the above address.

South London Art Gallery, Peckham Road, S.E.15. "The History and Appreciation of Ballet" (10 lectures). A. V. Coton. Thursday, 7.30 p.m. beginning 5th October. Fee for admission, 5s. Hon. Secretary: W. J. A. Hahn, Esq., Chief Librarian, Administrative Department, Dulwich Library, Lordship Lane, S.E.22.



HAROLD LANG AND HERBERT BLISS ARE HERE SEEN WALKING IN THE GROUNDS OF WINDSOR CASTLE WHICH THE WHOLE COMPANY VISITED DURING THEIR STAY

Photograph by courtesy of "Dance News"

GEORGE SKIBINE'S FIRST BALLET

GEORGE SKIBINE'S first ballet *A Tragedy of Verona* was presented at the Edinburgh Festival by the Grand Ballet de Marquis de Cuevas. Skibine is one of the best liked dancers of the day and everyone must have wished him success as a choreographer. Yet although the ballet was well received by the audience he has, I think, made a mistake in choosing this oft-treated theme and especially in using the Tchaikovsky *Fantasia*. It appears ideally balletic but is too brief and too episodic and impossible to match consistently to the action.

There is no synopsis so a knowledge of the story is evidently presumed—certainly it would otherwise be incomprehensible. Yet Skibine has departed widely and unnecessarily from the play. Juliet first appears after the guests at the ball have left, not amongst them. Mercutio is not killed in the duel scene which throws Tybalt's death into a different light and Romeo lives long enough after drinking the poison to dance another *pas de deux* with Juliet—as in Tudor's version.

Skibine is, of course, a wonderful Romeo, and Pagava makes an enchanting Juliet. In their brief *pas de deux* something of the ecstasy and urgency of

Shakespeare's verse is achieved though this probably owes more to their dramatic ability and the impassioned music than to the expressiveness of the movement.

Skibine has a few snatches of solo dancing, and one flashing entrance of Serge Golovine's as "a Montague" almost steals the show. The work for the *corps* is the weakest part; if the time allotted them were cut and used to establish the principal characters the whole ballet would be tauter and more dramatic.

The single set is ingeniously constructed to serve for every scene and the bright costumes of the supporting dancers stand out clearly against it. Skibine's black and white is attractive but I disliked the unrelieved white for Pagava—too virginal for any Juliet and especially for one who flings herself with abandon into Romeo's arms almost the moment they meet!

CHRISTINE HUNTER.

The Houston Rogers photograph on the cover shows Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin in "Chopiniana", one of the ballets in the repertoire of their new company

SADLER'S WELLS STARTS OUT AGAIN (2)

By FRANKLIN WHITE

EVENTUALLY the tour's structure was formed and while the business management got down to such things as salaries, currency restrictions and convertibility, hotels, etc., the stage management, with the heads of the wardrobe department, began the packing arrangements. The amount and size of every article has to be assessed and its method of travelling needs much thought. This varies from large hampers, each capable of holding the complete costumes of such moderate sized ballets as *Les Patineurs*, to specially made crates for things like the rocks in *Giselle* and tu-tus. Certain easily crushable costumes, such as those for *The Sleeping Beauty*, will travel in two pan-technicons, with fitted hanging rails, as far as New York, where they will be transferred to portable costume stands with waterproof covering (every eventuality has to be thought of). These will stand in the cattle truck for the rest of the travelling.

Large things like the double sized flats can be folded and travel as they are, but the backcloths set a problem. English road laws do not allow cloths of more than 40ft. to be transported. Our cloths are 60ft., so the battens top and bottom have to be cut and the canvas folded. Once in the States they can be re-assembled and travel that way in the five 60ft. cattle trucks provided as part of our train. That is until we get to a small theatre and then the folding begins all over again.

Having gone over the packing and worked out the cubic volume of the whole lot, preparations have to be made for the Customs, who require that every article shall be checked at each border. As we are crossing American and Canadian borders five times, as well as leaving and entering England, it is more than necessary to have an efficient system. This problem at least is not new. When after the war it became apparent that we were to become perhaps the most widely toured theatrical company out of England, it was necessary for an easy method of clearing Customs to be devised, so for the trip to Vienna in 1946 Mr. Hughes and Mr. Yudkin, who at that time were both stage managers of the company, worked out a code and numbering system that has not only been acclaimed by Customs officials everywhere as the best yet, but has now been adopted by other companies. Briefly, it is that every article down to the last pair of ear-rings is listed, numbered and packed under the code of its ballet. Every separate bit of scenery, every basket with its letter and number, can be found on the list, and in the case of the baskets their contents can be

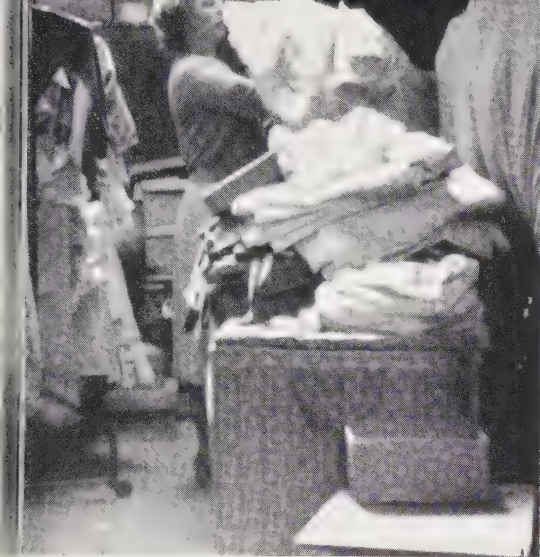
found marked under the basket number. At the moment, during the last week of the London season, while we are dancing in front, behind, out of sight, the staff are busy pasting code labels on the scenery as it stands set. (I have just been told that on the arrival of the New York City Ballet at Covent Garden their staff said that the American Customs approached them on the subject of their trip to England and showed them our code method and asked them to use it!)

In addition to all this, the price of every article has to be shown at the borders. A proof of the efficiency of this system was shown last year when six thousand separate articles passed through the New York Customs in one hour. It also serves as a quick means of identification, so necessary when everything, including all the worn out shoes, must be brought back with us, as we are not exporters!

Difficulties are always being met with, such as the fact that the sailing date of the boat with the scenery is not yet known, yet our staff has to be out of the way so that the New York City Centre Ballet can come in. This means outside storing and inability to arrange the date of Customs clearance, which can be done at the warehouse but only just before the sailing date. Another difficulty is the season of one week just before we leave. All the make-up and wardrobe equipment will have gone so this entails all kinds of duplication to be worked out.

Publicity and programmes have to be considered and much work has been going on between our Public Relations Office and Barry Hyams in New York, who handles Mr. Hurok's affairs of this kind. Amongst other things a new souvenir programme has been produced over here and again, because of export difficulties and the need to avoid extra cartage, will have to be printed over there. During the same time as making the arrangements to get us to America and dealing with the normal not inconsiderable amount of work of running the current season, two other large jobs have become the lot of the business management—two jobs that we in the company would not spare them—clothes and parties!

It may be remembered that last year the girls of the company were presented with the products of the leading textile manufacturers and fashion houses of England to take with them to America. The boys got a beret apiece and the privilege of carrying the extra heavy cases of the girls throughout the tour! This year, however, we are being looked upon with



PACKING COSTUMES FOR THE TOUR

more favour and, under the organisation of the editor of the *Ambassadors* magazine, who apart from running the official export organ of the "rag" trade, is particularly fond of ballet and especially of Sadler's Wells, the boys are being equipped to the same extent as the girls. Suits, coats and sports clothes are being divided amongst us, together with accessories from silk shirts and umbrellas specially built to enable them to be packed away in sections. As well as hats, ties, shoes, gloves and socks, etc., such extras as slippers and loafer shoes have been given to us by a firm who do not even export their menswear to America. They have simply given them as a gesture.

The girls are receiving about the same as last year, but yet it is a little hard to assess correctly the extent of these gifts but it varies between a selection of evening gowns, cocktail dresses, coats and suits with, of course, all accessories. During this last week of the season rehearsing has changed into non-stop clothes fittings, as all this was announced to us only a few days ago and much must be done now because there will be only three weeks on our return from holiday, before the date of departure. I am very glad to see that the staff have also been remembered for it was the company "spirit" that was so noticeable across the Atlantic last time, and the journey would not be possible if the staff did not work with us as a whole.

Parties take a good deal of arranging. With their cute sense of hospitality the Americans would have us in the depths of entertainment day and night and a halt has to be called somewhere before we are quite beyond dancing. Meeting people in the towns and cities that we visit is a very important part of the tour and many receptions must not be missed, but it is often hard to be at one's best after a performance and per-

haps a day's travelling, particularly as the shows start at a much later hour than they do over here. Consequently it is impossible to accept every invitation, much as one would have enjoyed going. This does not mean that there will be any lack of parties, or acceptance on our part—far from it, unless we have all changed drastically in the last year. In fact, a well filled file bears witness to that fact. It is just that the management has to keep an eye on official receptions as much as it does on the other parts of the tour while the planning is organised.

One invitation that I am told has been gladly accepted again this year is that of Mr. J. Alden Talbot to spend a day on his New Jersey estate. To bring the ballet companies from the somewhat hectic life in New York for a day at his lakeside house, has been a regular practice of Mr. Talbot and I know that I am not alone in appreciating that well-needed break in those very perfect surroundings.

In a few weeks' time the activity at Covent Garden will be transferred to New York, where the scenery will arrive about ten days to a week before we are due to open. The stage staff will be there to meet it and this time, as we are the first show of the season, they will be able to get straight into the theatre. Last time a certain amount of waiting at the quayside was involved. One of the American Trade Union rules concerning the duplication of every member of our staff with an American equivalent proved invaluable to us last time and should again on this much bigger adventure. Not only does it help with the prodigious amount of work but it makes for good liaison between ourselves and the theatre staff at the beginning. Not that there was any difficulty before. The mutual

ANOTHER GLIMPSE OF THE WARDROBE AS TUTUS ARE SPECIALLY PACKED TO AVOID CRUSHING



good feelings grew from the start. Our staff have nothing but praise for everyone, especially at the Met, where of course they worked longest together. On the American staff's part, it is very unusual for them to throw a party for a visiting company, as they did for us, and even more unusual for them to say how much they wanted us to come back.

When Mr. Hughes went over in May he was quite overwhelmed at the reception that he got at the news

that we were coming back. When the manager of the Met. came to London earlier this year, the green-grocer next to the stage door of the Met. and the people from the bar opposite, all sent presents with him for our staff. This great interest in us is not just the return of a successful company, it is an indication of something even more worthwhile.

EDITOR'S NOTE—NEXT MONTH FRANKLIN WHITE WILL WRITE OF THE NEW YORK OPENING.

DANCE IN AMERICA - 1949-1950 (2)

By ARTHUR TODD

THREE days after the completion of the New York City Ballet Company's fall season another important event took place at the New York City Centre. This was the debut of the newly established New York City Dance Theatre under the co-direction of Richard Pleasant, who helped organise Ballet Theatre in 1939, and Isadora Bennett, a well known figure in the contemporary dance world. Here, for the first time in American history, most of the leading exponents of modern dance joined forces in a unified group. Its sponsor-choreographers were Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, Hanya Holm, José Limon, Valerie Bettis and Helen Tamiris, and Sophie Maslow, representing the New Dance Group which she, Jane Dudley and William Bales directed. During the series of ten performances, thirty dance works, composed by thirteen different choreographers, were presented. The total dance personnel of the company numbered seventy-one and, of these, there were six guest soloists—Nina Fonaroff, Eve Gentry, Katherine Litz, Iris Mabry, Merce Cunningham and Peter Hamilton. Missing from this first series of performances were Martha Graham and her company who were completing the first half of a national tour; Helen Tamiris, who had prior Broadway theatre commitments; and Pearl Primus, who was on her way home to America after a year of extensive research in Africa. Also missing from the roster of sponsor-choreographers and performing artists were two major figures in American dance—Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn—and it is hoped that these two pioneers will be invited to share in the future development of this dance theatre project before its next season.

During the New York City Dance Theatre's first season, José Limon's *The Moor's Pavanne* loomed larger than most of its surrounding works, just as it did during its première during the late summer at the

American Dance Festival. Noteworthy, too, were revival of Doris Humphrey's *The Shakers* and Hanya Holm's *Ozark Suite*. On the other hand, Charles Weidman's new *Rose of Sharon*, inspired by the Songs of Solomon, was considered a failure because it lacked choreographic focus and was completely miscast.

The first significant event in 1950 was Martha Graham's early January solo debut in *Judith* to a score by William Schuman especially commissioned by the Louisville Symphony Orchestra. Though Miss Graham scored a tremendous success in Louisville in this twenty five minute solo dance, she was not able to present it during her New York season because it required the accompaniment of a sixty piece orchestra. She did, however, offer two new works to New York, *The Eye of Anguish* and *Diversion of Angels* for her company and *Fable of Eve*, a new solo work for herself. (A complete report of this season appeared in the March issue of *Ballet Today*.) The fourth work, *The Strangler*, choreographed by and featuring Erick Hawkins, was booed and hissed at its first two showings and was not repeated for its third scheduled appearance in the New York engagement.

Beginning late in February, the New York City Ballet Company produced six new works, providing the most important season in its history. As covered in detail in the April issue of *Ballet Today*, the major artistic and popular successes were Frederick Ashton's *Illuminations*, suggested by Rimbaud's poems and life and set to music by Benjamin Britten and with decor and costumes by Cecil Beaton, and Jerome Robbins's *Age of Anxiety*. Also of note was the revival of Balanchine's *The Prodigal Son* and William Dollar's *The Duel*, an expanded and revised version of his *Le Combat* which he choreographed for Les Ballets de Paris. Balanchine's *Pas de Deux Romantique*, poking fun at classical ballet styles, was not generally appreciated. However, the joint Balanchine-Robbins frolic, *Jones Beach*, had quite



Photograph by Ira Rosenberg, *New York Herald Tribune*

OLIVER SMITH AND LUCIA CHASE, CO-DIRECTORS OF BALLET THEATRE, WITH RUDOLF BING, MANAGER OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE, SIGNING THE CONTRACT TO SUPERVISE ALL DANCING IN OPERA AT THE MET. DURING 1950-51

a success though, actually, it is a work more suited to the Broadway theatre than a ballet repertoire. The New York City Ballet Company has made tremendous advances during the past year and it is unquestionably the second ranking company in America today. Its London debut on July 10th at Covent Garden marked another milestone in its progress and likewise added further lustre to American ballet. It is to be hoped that its present exchange policy with the Sadler's Wells will be developed to the point where dancers, as well as choreographers, will be loaned back and forth.

Last April in New York will be chiefly remembered as "dance saturation" month because, for a week at least, Ballet Theatre, Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Katherine Dunham were playing in competition with each other. (Incidentally, the same unfortunate instance would have been repeated in London in July

when the New York City Ballet Company and Martha Graham were due to appear at almost the same time. The stupidity on the part of whoever was responsible for these arrangements was circumvented by Martha Graham's injury which caused her to cancel her season.) As detailed in the June issue of *Ballet Today*, Ballet Theatre once again proved its first position in the American ballet field. Though Herbert Ross's *Caprichos* was the major new success, each of the other three premières—Antony Tudor's *Nimbus*, John Taras' *Designs With Strings* and William Dollar's *Jeux*—proved interesting additions to the repertoire. On the other hand, the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo's season was chiefly distinguished by the presence of Yvette Chauviré, *première danseuse étoile de France*, and by the continuingly brilliant progress made by Mary Ellen Moylan. Katherine Dunham, it is disappointing to



JEROME ROBBINS'S DANCES FOR "MISS LIBERTY" WERE ACCLAIMED AS THE BEST WORKS IN THE BROADWAY MUSICAL COMEDY FIELD DURING 1949-50

add, came back home to America much changed after a triumphant tour in Europe. Appealing more than ever to the general public, she struck many as overly chic, superficial, pictorial and lacking much of her former magnificent primitive power. Nevertheless, she was immensely popular and her engagement was extended up to the time she was due to commence her South American tour.

As far as dancing on Broadway was concerned, the 1949-50 season, taken as a whole, was undistinguished. Among the few exceptions were Jerome Robbins's witty and sparkling dances for *Miss Liberty*; John Butler's creative and ingenious use of dance movement to heighten the dramatic scenes in Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The Consul*, soon to be seen in London; and Wendy Toye's charming dances for *Peter Pan*. The film season, too, left much to be desired. Outstanding, perhaps, was Gene Kelly's choreography for *On The Town*. Though lacking the design and unity of Robbins's work for the original Broadway production, Kelly's dances were often spirited and imaginative.

The 1949-50 season was practically a one-man triumph for Jerome Robbins, who was showered with critical acclaim for his dances for *Miss Liberty*; his most mature ballet to date, *Age of Anxiety*; and for his own superb performance in Balanchine's *The Prodigal Son*. In the modern dance world José Limon's magnificent success in Paris last May, together with his stunning

choreographic invention and dancing in *The Moor's Pavanne*, were but further evidences that Limon is unquestionably America's greatest male contemporary dancer. Also worth remembering from the host of last season's events were Ruth St. Denis's magnificent solo performance at the Y.M. & Y.W.H.A. Playhouse on October 6th; Uday Shan-Kar's mid-winter season at the 48th Street Theatre; Charles Weidman's choreography for the New York City Opera Company's production of *The Love of Three Oranges*; the original production of Herbert Ross's *Caprichos* for the Choreographer's Workshop at the Hunter College Playhouse on January 29th; and, last but not least, the thunderous opening night reception given the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company at the Metropolitan Opera House last fall.

Fortunately for America, our 1950-51 dance season will be auspiciously opened by the welcome return visit of the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company. We also have a much revitalised ballet company to look forward to seeing with our operas now that Ballet Theatre will be in charge of the dance and dancers for the Metropolitan Opera House. We may expect some great things now that Antony Tudor will be at the helm with Margaret Craske as ballet mistress. These are but a few of the auspicious events which may mean that this is the beginning of the greatest decade in history for dance and dancers in America.

A FIT OF ABSTRACTION

By PAMELA M. PRICE

RECENTLY, the flames of controversy in the world of ballet have burned with unusual strength. And what has caused this wagging of tongues and exchange of opinions in terms so uncompromising and so acrimonious? The age-old conflict between the supporters of "abstract" ballet and those who uphold the idea of ballet as a dramatic art of the theatre.

Of course, this is not a new controversy. It started with Noverre or even before him, and it has been the mainstay of the theorists, critics, audiences, know-alls and know-nothings for years. But the present uprising of the old argument has been helped by the recent visit of the New York City Ballet and, in particular, by some of the works of their chief choreographer, Balanchine.

Now Balanchine is an eminent man. Many of his admirers would accord him the rank of the greatest living choreographer and even his detractors cannot deny that he has a mastery of the vocabulary of dancing which is unequalled. Yet is he a great ballet-maker? It is here that opinions are cleft so sharply. Balanchine himself claims that there is no such thing as "abstract" ballet; that the juxtaposition of even two dancers on the stage creates an emotional tension, a dramatic

situation in which the audience can be interested. He believes that stories, and even themes, are unnecessary to sustain the interest of the audience, that movement can create its own tensions. He denies that ballets like *Ballet Imperial* and *Symphony in C* are "abstract"—they have a definite emotional content inherent in the movements of the dancers; to those who consider such works cold and lacking in emotion, he replies that there is ample emotion in every *pas de deux*, in every *ensemble*, in every change of tempo, in the transition from dancing by a single dancer to the mass groups and mass movements of the *corps de ballet*.

From this attitude, one thing is quite clear and, in fact, is borne out by Balanchine's work in the ballet medium and by known facts about his career and upbringing. He is a musician by temperament and by training. He thinks in terms of music, music is the mainspring of his inspiration and all his works show that sensitive appreciation of music which make his ballets so harmonious to eye and ear. It is not surprising that a musician of such sensibility should think of ballet in terms of musical emotion rather than of dramatic emotion.

The emotion engendered by listening to music is of a quite different kind from that caused by watching, let us say, a performance of *Othello*. The first kind is what might be called "all-over" emotion, it is something super-human and outside the normal range of one's feelings, it is perhaps the purest form of emotion for it is entirely unselfish and unselfconscious; it is a feeling not of this world but of something quite beyond it. It does not matter if the piece of music in question is closely linked with our own time and our own problems, as for instance Vaughan Williams' Sixth Symphony may be, we still feel part of the Universe rather than an inhabitant of it. When we watch *Othello*, however, our emotions are totally different. Here we are concerned with humanity, with one human being or with a whole multitude of jealousy-ridden human beings according to our capacity for appreciation and the power of the players to convey the author's intent. But it is a human feeling, one which we can relate to our normal daily emotional experience.

What then is the reason for this difference and how can it be applied to the whole question of "abstract" ballet?

First of all, we must consider the material of which the ballet is made. First there is the dancing; the actual steps, groups, poses, the patterns woven in time and space. Then there is the music, the progenitor,

JOSE LIMON'S "THE MOOR'S PAVANNE" WAS THE OUTSTANDING MODERN WORK OF THE 1949-50 SEASON



the accompaniment, sometimes unfortunately, the prop on which the work depends for colour and life. One wonders where the so-called classics like *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty* would be today without the magic of Tchaikovsky's melodies to sustain the interest and hold the fancy. Then there is the scenic picture, the frame, the visual accompaniment, and finally the costumes, the completion of the stage picture, that help or hinder the choreographic design. Now we have a ballet; choreography, music, scenery and costumes. But, there is one notable absentee—the performer.

Here we have the crux of the matter, the one element which is lacking, but the essential element. Without dancers there can be no ballet, at least no ballet on the stage. On the films it can be done without performers; Disney gave us in his *Fantasia* the perfect abstract ballet to Bach's Toccata and Fugue, a ballet of colours, shapes and lines. But on the stage, we have dancers, men and women. They are limited by the frailty of the human frame, by their own personalities, by their backgrounds, their upbringing, the hundred-and-one influences which have been exerted over them since the cradle. They are not automata, they cannot be switched on and off like a mass of coloured lights, nor moved by the turn of a handle. They can be made to perform feats of physical endurance and agility which are beyond the bounds of the usual human being, but they cannot be divorced entirely from the aura of humanity that hangs round them wherever they go.

So here we have the complete negation of the idea of abstract ballet. Human beings remain human beings whether you attempt to turn them into mythical creatures like Bluebirds or Wilis, or simply into dancing robots. Balanchine was quite right—you cannot have abstract ballet. You may attempt to turn your dancer into an instrument of the orchestra. She may weave her way among her fellows like the fine strain of a violin but she remains a human being and her movements may engender a feeling in the audience which is of quite a different quality from that created by the music. Musical emotion and the emotion evoked by human movement are not parallel; the audience feels it and is dissatisfied.

Then why try? Consciously or unconsciously those who follow blindly the abstract line are trying to do the impossible. They seem to be depriving themselves of one of ballet's greatest assets, the human element. They waste the energies of the dancers in movements which are only incidentally related to human passions. If some dramatic tension is engendered, so much the better; if not, then the audience can watch the evolutions with the same interest and appreciation as they watch the smooth workings of a clock or hear the ticking of a metronome. If it is admitted that one can not escape the human element in dancing, why not



MARIA TALLCHIEF AND NICHOLAS MAGALLANES IN
"FOUR TEMPERAMENTS"

realise that this is not merely an incidental but an essential and build on that foundation? Ballet can, and at its best does, contain dramatic emotion. It is an art of the theatre founded on dancing as the drama is founded on words; just as the words of a drama must be related to the characters and the plot of the play so the dancing of a ballet must be related to the characters and content of a ballet. Even in radio drama, where the audience is deprived of visual contact, the human voice is the medium through which emotion is conveyed. A drama read simply in one tone by one person throughout would lose its value and create no tension. Both the drama and the ballet are founded on human personality. "Man is and should be expressive from head to toe." Then why not give him an opportunity to express himself?

In an article recently published, Lincoln Kirstein, the director of the New York City Ballet, has some harsh things to say about dancers who "interpret" the works of a choreographer, and Balanchine himself has said that when he teaches his ballets, the dancers are not told anything about the roles they are to take or indeed about the ballet as a whole until the work is completed. Now there are, no doubt, good reasons for this. We have all seen, and suffered, the ham actor and his counterpart, the ham dancer, who thinks a superabundance of personality a substitute for failure to follow the choreographer's intention. America, the land where everyone is trying to "be something", would seem to call for special care in this direction. But ham dancing is one thing and unemotional stodginess is another—small wonder that the New York City Ballet dancers are accused of lacking personality.

seems to have been drilled into them that any emotion is bad emotion and when they are called upon to play a role which cries out for acting, they appear self-conscious and ill at ease. One admires their technical brilliance, their air of radiant well-being, but the constant restriction placed upon their emotions seems to have drained them of the ability to live and feel a role and to convey its significance to the audience. Restraint can be an admirable quality in a dancer, but there is all the difference in the world between acting and "mugging".

What makes it all so unsatisfactory is that Americans can, and do, dance with true feeling, given a suitable role. Looking back at the visit of Ballet Theatre a few years ago, one remembers the work of Nora Kaye, one of the finest dancer-actresses seen in London for years, the gaiety of *Fancy Free* and the clever characterisation of the three different sailors, the tenderness and pathos of Michael Kidd in *On Stage* and dozens of other small roles danced with real feeling and understanding. The only type of ballet in which Americans inevitably fail

is in the "classics" and why should they be expected to succeed in something which is utterly alien to their background and tradition? In this country, we have a tradition of acting which is far older than our ballet tradition and in recent years there has been a tendency in some choreographers to over-emphasise the dramatic elements in ballet, and dancing in its own right has suffered. It is not surprising that a large number of serious ballet-goers now presented with a number of ballets in which dancing plays the dominant role, should raise a cry of delight and decide that dancing and dancing only is ballet. But if they stop and think for a while and, in particular, look back at the previous volumes of ballet history, they will find that their ideas are neither new nor revolutionary. They are the views against which every great innovator from Noverre to Fokine has spoken and they are the views which, carried to excess, have led ballet to its greatest period of decadence—a period from which Diaghilev was to rescue it and bring it once more to its rightful place in the modern theatre.

TELEVISION SURVEY

By LISA GORDON SMITH

IN the four months since *The Eve of St. Agnes* was televised on May 1st (reviewed in the July issue of *Ballet Today*) there has been an unusually small amount of ballet on television, and of the three programmes which did take place, two were not intended to contain "ballet" in the accepted sense of the term.

On June 12th, Christian Simpson presented an ambitious programme entitled *The Story of the Waltz*, the title of which explains the intention and the content. The well known exhibition ballroom and cabaret dancers, Ronald Boyer and Jeanne Ravel, bore the brunt of the dancing, and also arranged the *corps de ballet ensembles*.

The unfortunate coincidence of this programme with another notable ballet event prevented my seeing the finished production and I can only review it on the rehearsals, which means that I can write of the dancing but not of the programme as it appeared to viewers.

As was inevitable with two such experienced and graceful dancers as Boyer and Ravel, who have worked together for long enough to have achieved a truly harmonious partnership, the standard of dancing was high. They were supported, too, by many dancers who have had previous television experience. Among some familiar faces, I noticed those of Leonard Boucher and Jasf Crandall.

There is no "front" to a television rehearsal, for very often, as in films, it is the camera which moves rather than the performers; it is therefore very difficult for anyone who is not a technician to foresee in the studio how the dance arrangements will look on the screen. Despite a great deal of kindly and interesting explanation from Christian Simpson and Ronald Boyer I only feel confident to say that the production looked, at the rehearsal, as if it would be "all right on the night".

It was hoped, in official quarters, that Tamara Toumanova and Serge Lifar would come to London to do a television production on June 26th, but the project fell through for reasons having no connection with the B.B.C. and another programme had to be found in a hurry. Philip Bate indefatigably captured a bag of favourites from Sadler's Wells and, on the appointed day, gave a programme of some of the most beloved *divertissements*, which must have been sheer delight to the unfortunates who had queued in vain at Covent Garden.

Beryl Grey had never danced with a finer combination of her well remembered charm and her new-found authority than she did in the *Lac des Cygnes Act III* variations that evening. John Field, also, upheld the high standard he is establishing for himself.

Among the variations from *The Sleeping Beauty*, the Blue Bird *pas de deux*, danced by Alexis Rassiné and Rowena Jackson, left this viewer with just two impressions: (a) that this is a variation that we have seen too often, and (b) that these two dancers seem singularly ill-assorted to perform it together.

Kenneth Macmillan, Gerd Larsen and Anne Negus, as "Florestan and his Two Sisters" and Avril Navarre (deputising for a foot-injured Margaret Dale) and Brian Shaw as "The White Cat and Puss in Boots" all gave the performances their admirers have learned to expect; and the whole cast, in excerpts from *Les Patineurs*, showed this to be potentially a good ballet for adaptation for the screen. It would be pleasant, some day, to see it as a whole in this medium.

The question of ballet on television versus ballet for television is a bone of contention which has been gnawed bare by news-hounds and others. It seems that there is a place for both, but no place for an injudicious mixture of the two. Philip Bate may be thanked for never stumbling over this doorstep of confusion, and in this programme he offered us the opportunity of viewing some of our favourite dancers in excerpts from their repertoire, and gave us exactly that, with a beautiful clarity and no attempt at self-glorification.

George Foa, a comparatively new producer, is one to be watched with pleasurable anticipation, as his production of *L'Arlesienne* on July 3rd demonstrated. The only part of this programme to fall within the scope of this article was the beautiful Minuet and the intricate Farandole choreographed by Angelo Andes. That the producer did not give these as much camera

scope as dance lovers would have wished was accounted for by their comparative unimportance in the unfolding of the drama. It would be interesting to see both these dances included in a future programme of *divertissements*.

Apart from the promised return of *Ballet for Beginners* on an even more extensive scale, television's ballet plans are, at the time writing, too indefinite to be given much publicity, but I am assured that balletomanes will have a considerable amount to look forward to this autumn and winter.

News from Monte Carlo

During July and August the Monte Carlo Casino staged a big gala performance of ballet in which Janine Charrat appeared, while Tamara Toumanova appeared at the Palm Beach Casino at Cannes. At a special U.N.E.S.C.O. *soirée a Divertissement* tracing the history of French literature through the ages was given, for which Gérard Mulys, maître de ballet of the Nice Opera, mounted several ballets in which Marcelle Cassini, Boris Trailine, Gèneviève Lespagnol, Jacqueline Rivoir and Irene Larina appeared.

Several Galas of Spanish dancing were given at Nice during the season. Two performances were given by Rosario and Antonio and three by Teresa and Luisillio with their company of fifteen dancers. This was followed by one performance by José Torres and Marianne Ivanoff.

BERYL GREY AND JOHN FIELD
TELEVISED IN
THE "SWAN LAKE"
THIRD ACT PAS DE
DEUX



Action photograph by
G. B. L. Wilson

WALTER GORE: AN ATTEMPT AT APPRAISAL

By CLIVE BARNES

GORE BALLETS, like beer, are an acquired taste, but this taste seems to have been acquired by very few of our critics. In damning his ballets with faint praise many of them call the choreography "musical" or "inventive" at the same time appearing silently to condemn him as uninspired. This cheese-paring praise, with its undertone of condescension, puts Gore in danger of being smothered by the reputation for that kind of competence we too often have to associate with a poet-laureate. I am not suggesting that Gore should be the subject of extravagant encomiums, and I would hate to herald him as the White Hope or the Golden Boy of British Ballet, yet I do feel that he is worthy of considerably more attention than many critics and a certain section of the public give him.

Gore requires a rather different approach from that which one brings to almost any other choreographer. Consider how much he has in common with the poet Browning; they are both creators of the grotesque, both have developed a vigorous and original mode of expression and they share an interest in the relationship between men and women, a hearty sense of humour and a taste for the melodramatic. Even the basic failings of the poet are paralleled by those of the choreographer, as both are capable of incredibly bad work in which their invention is strained and their material is disjointed and amorphous. Just as it would be ridiculous to judge Browning on the standards which one would apply to, say, Pope, so it is equally foolish to judge Gore on the standards of Ashton.

I have called Gore a creator of the grotesque, a statement which has many implications. Any grotesque art must of necessity lack elegance, which will be replaced by eccentricity, but there is much more to it than that. Grotesque art can only exist if it is conceived in a personal idiom. The idiom can easily degenerate into the near-gibberish of *Finnegan's Wake*, but at its best it is an individual and powerful form of artistic expression with a bizarre attraction of its own, like the compelling oddity of a Goya drawing.

The acknowledged masters of the grotesque ballet are Massine and de Valois. Massine's ballets contain so much technical virtuosity that their strong appeal for audiences does not rest solely on their grotesque elements, while de Valois has such a fine sense of the dramatic that many of her ballets can be enjoyed as dance-drama even by an audience which disregards the choreography. Gore even if he would have chosen the virtuoso approach of Massine is denied this by the technical scope of the company he works with, and as

yet he has not shown any very considerable flair for the dramatic. Consequently we are left with grotesque choreography which must be its own justification. Gore's choreographic style (like Cranko's in *Children's Corner*) can have no bolstering up to give it easily-won popularity with audiences and critics.

Gore's dance vocabulary is based on classical steps but all the more showy, exciting movements have been almost eliminated. *Entrechats*, *tours en l'air* and *fouettés* are rare in his work, and nearly all movements are given an eccentric flavour. There are innumerable examples of this eccentricity; Rafael's *pirouettes* in *Antonia*, with one leg behind the other; the staccato leaps with flexed knees performed by the four boys in *Winter Night*; the frenetic solo called *Hysteries* in *Concerto Burlesco*; the odd, twisted dance of Jack Ketch in *Mr. Punch*; the busy writhings of the two boys in *Kaleidoscope*.

It would appear that some influence has been exerted on Gore by the works of Massine, de Valois and Tudor, but many elements in his style seem to derive, possibly unconsciously, from folk-dancing. This, obvious in *Bartlemas Fair*, *Simple Symphony* and *Mr. Punch*, gives a very national flavour to all his ballets.

Gore shows a strong rhythmic sense but is not a musical choreographer in the way that term could be applied to Balanchine. Dances can be composed to either the rhythm of music or to the musical phrase, and it is the former method Gore seems to prefer. The quality of rhythmic choreography, and this is as true of Petit as Gore, is vitality and vigour, but it rather lacks continuity and flow. This can be illustrated by comparing *Winter Night* or Petit's *Pas d'Action* with *Ballet Imperial*. It may well be that it is the recognition of this lack of continuity that has led Gore to give a *divertissement* form to most of his ballets. The choice of this form provides incidentally the answer to those who complain of the frequency of exits and entrances in his work, as these are part and parcel of *divertissement* form and are as abundant in *Les Rendezvous* as in *Plaisance*.

Gore still lacks skill in handling a *corps de ballet*, but this is true of the early works of most of the choreographers nurtured at the Mercury and must be considered an occupational limitation which he will probably be able to overcome. A far greater objection to Gore's choreography is the scant regard he shows for stasis. One of the fundamental distinctions between ballet and ballroom dancing is that in the former the dance-patterns have moments of pause, while in the



Photograph by Peggy Delius

GORE'S LEANING TO THE GROTESQUE IS SHOWN IN THIS ACTION PHOTOGRAPH OF "MR. PUNCH"

latter one moves ceaselessly until the last note. The time sequence of pause and movement is a pattern as vital to the ballet as the more evident horizontal and vertical dynamic patterns. Gore far too often composes dances in which the dancers perform until they and the audience are wilting. This frequently gives the busy, frenzied effect to Gore's choreography which many find so distracting.

Gore's career as a choreographer falls into three periods; his first tentative attempts just before and during the early months of the war, the period during which he was the patron-saint of the Oxford University Ballet Club and produced the divertissements *Bartlemas Fair*, *Confessional* and *Porphyria's Lover*, and the ballets he has made since his return from the Forces. This last group contains an oddly assorted mixture of hits and misses. *Simple Symphony*, a vivacious divertisse-

ment with a whirling, Massine-like finale; *Mr. Punch*, a fine balletic realisation of a native tradition; *Concerto Barlesco*, an esoteric joke that completely failed; *Plaisance*, a slight ballet that goes on too long; *Winter Night*, tedious and pretentious with moments of inspiration; *Kaleidoscope*, a busy, bitty little work full of interest but lost on a large stage; and *Antonia*, in many ways his most considerable work.

On glancing through this list, one thing is apparent. Gore is still an apprentice choreographer. He has not yet reached maturity. Most choreographers, for example Ashton and Tudor, produce a few apprentice works but very soon acquire mastery over their medium. Other choreographers, like Lichine and Gore, produce a succession of ballets, some good, some bad, but none in which one feels the choreographer to have been fully articulate. The fact that

Gore is still striving after complete artistic expression after some years of experience as a choreographer does not lessen his chances. His recent ballet, *Antonia*, marked what may be the beginning of his maturity. The tension was upheld throughout the work, the *corps de ballet* was handled with a new confidence, the dance patterns, as original as ever, were no longer so tied down to the rhythmic accompaniment, the necessity for pause as well as movement was recognised, the characters had a depth unknown before in Gore's work and the whole production showed a sure sense of the dramatic.

Gore has shown brilliant promise. His talent is like a gem encrusted with the dust of mediocrity. If this dust can be blown away he could very well become one of the outstanding choreographers of the next decade. This is not a prophesy. He has some way to go yet and he is no longer a very young man. However, he has an individual style and already has two of the best ballets of the last six years to his credit. He has the potentiality to develop into a choreographer of the first rank. Whether he will or not you never can tell. In the words of the Prime Minister of a war before the last—wait and see!



Action photograph by Frank Sharman

PAULA HINTON AND WALTER GORE IN "ANTONIA"



A TYPICAL MOMENT IN
"SIMPLE SYMPHONY"

*Action photograph by J.
Peggy Delius*

The Editor,
Ballet Today.

Dear Madam,

Some years ago I staged for Ballet Theatre my production of *Giselle*. It was acknowledged by the doyen of American critics, the great John Martin, as the finest production of *Giselle* ever seen in America. Since my departure from Ballet Theatre, two illustrious choreographers have laid their, alas, too heavy hand upon it and destroyed its line and atmospheric period that in all due modesty I was able to create, thanks to all the help I had from the divine Olga Spessiva, who

taught me so much of what I know about *Giselle*.

Today, Ballet Theatre still present *Giselle* as my production and choreography. With all my heart I love this company, and admire with sincerity the great work Lucia Chase, its illustrious director, has done and is doing, but for the first time I must in fairness to myself state in print that this last production of *Giselle* by Ballet Theatre at Covent Garden Opera House is not my idea of this great ballet.

Yours faithfully,

ANTON DOLIN.

AMERICAN NATIONAL BALLET THEATRE

THE pictures on this page and the next show four ballets in the repertoire of the American National Ballet Theatre which recently had a two-week season at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. This company excels in works which grow out of the strong American dance idiom and London, which had previously taken *Fancy Free* and *Interplay* to its heart,

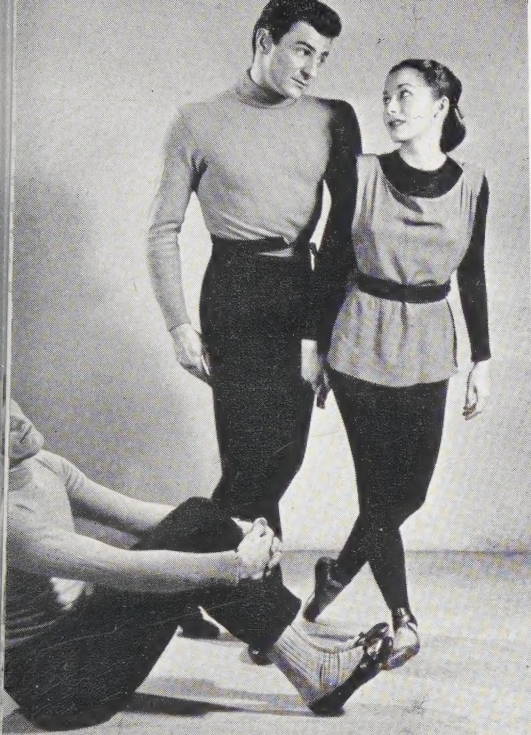
extended the same warm welcome to *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo* which, although they date back to 1938 and 1942 respectively, were new in this country. The most recent addition to this genre, *Fall River Legend*, also made a tremendous impression. "The American Way of Life" as exemplified in these ballets has proved very much to the taste of English ballet lovers.

JOHN KRIZA AND PAUL GODKIN IN "BILLY THE KID",
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A SCENE FROM "CAPRICIOS", ONE OF THE NEW
BALLETTS BROUGHT OVER BY THE AMERICAN NATIONAL
BALLET THEATRE





PAUL GODKIN, JOHN KRIZA AND RUTH ANN KOESUN IN "INTERPLAY", THE JEROME ROBBINS BALLET WHICH LONDON FIRST SAW IN 1946



Photograph by Alfredo Valente

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